

Message Text

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TAGS: PINT, JA

SUBJECT: LDP CRISIS TO BE JUDGED BY YAMAGUCHI VOTERS

SUMMARY: GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION IN YAMAGUCHI PREFECTURE HAS KEY ISSUE OF LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (LDP) RESPONSIBILITY FOR INVOLVEMENT IN LOCKHEED BRIBERY. LDP CANDIDATE HIRAI WAS STRONG FAVORITE FOR ELECTION PRIOR TO TANAKA ARREST THE ADVANTAGE NOW HAS SHIFTED TOWARD THE OPPOSITION CANDIDATE MATSUMURA WHO HAS THE COMBINED SUPPORT OF JAPAN SOCIALIST PARTY (JSP), JAPAN COMMUNIST PARTY (JCP), KOMEITO AND EFFECTIVELY THE VOTES OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST PARTY (DSP) WHICH HAS STATED POLICY COALITIONS LEADING TO SIGNIFICANT LDP LOSSES IN THE GENERAL ELECTIONS THIS FALL. END SUMMARY.

1. ON JULY 28, THE YAMAGUCHI PREFECTURAL ELECTION CONTROL COMMITTEE ANNOUNCED THAT A GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION WOULD BE HELD ON AUGUST 22. THE ELECTION WAS NECESSITATED BY THE RESIGNATION, FOR REASONS OF HEALTH, OF LDP GOVERNOR MASAYUKI HASHIMOTO ON JUNE 30.

2. THE FIELD OF POTENTIAL CANDIDATES HAS NARROWED TO TWO, TORU HIRAI LDP AND AKIRA MATSUMURA WITH THE COMBINED SUPPORT OF JSP, JCP, KOMEITO AND, EFFECTIVELY, THE VOTES OF THE DSP WHICH HAS THE STATED POLICY OF VOTING AGAINST THE LDP CANDIDATE.

3. HIRAI WAS STRONGLY FAVORED TO WIN PRIOR TO THE CRISIS GENERATED BY THE ARREST OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER KAKUEI TANAKA. HIRAI,

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SUPPORTED BY THE SHINTARO ABE FACTION OF LDP, HAD THE ADVANTAGE OF

INCUMBENCY AS VICE GOVERNOR AND THE POSITION OF ACTING GOVERNOR DURING GOVERNOR HASHIMOTO'S LONG ILLNESS (APPROX SIX MONTHS). ALSO THE DSP, JSP AND KOMEITO HAD INFORMALLY INDICATED THAT THEY WOULD SUPPORT HIM AS AN INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE. THE CRISIS CENTERING ON LDP RESPONSIBILITY FOR INVOLVEMENT IN THE LOCKHEED/TANAKA AND RELATED SCANDALS HAS BECOME A KEY CAMPAIGN ISSUE AND THE ADVANTAGE APPEARS TO HAVE SHIFTED TO THE OPPOSITION CANDIDATE MATSUMURA.

4. AKIRA MATSUMURA, AGE 59, CHAIRMAN OF YAMAGUCHI PREFECTURAL COUNCIL OF LABOR UNIONS, HAS STRESSED THE SCANDAL ISSUE IN HIS CAMPAIGN. THE LDP IS CITED AS HAVING BEEN DEEPLY INVOLVED IN THE GOVERNMENT/BUSINESS SCANDALS SINCE THE WAR AND THAT YAMAGUCHI PREFECTURE HAD BEEN THE HOME OF THREE SIGNIFICANT LDP POLITICIANS: TWO FORMER PRIME MINISTERS; EISAKU SATO AND NOBUSUKE KISHI AND HOUSE OF COUNCILORS SPEAKER SHIGEMUNE. HIS CANDIDACY AS A LEFTIST SPONSORED POLITICIAN IS OFFERED AS THE ALTERNATIVE TO THE SCANDAL RIDDEN LDP REGIME.

5. THIS GUBERNATORIAL CONTEST IN CONSERVATIVE YAMAGUCHI PREFECTURE HAS BECOME A CONFLICT BETWEEN THE CONSERVATIVE POLITICS OF THE LDP AND THE ANTI-LDP COALITION OF THE JSP, JCP, DSP AND KOMEITO. IF THE LDP CANDIDATE LOSES ON THE BASIS OF THE LDP SCANDAL ISSUE THE PRECEDENT MIGHT WELL PREVAIL IN THE UPCOMING GENERAL ELECTION.

6. THE 1972 ELECTION FOR THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES HAD APPROXIMATELY 55PERCENT VOTER PARTICIPATION. OF THAT THE LDP CANDIDATES RECEIVED APPROXIMATELY 53PERCENT OF THE VOTES. THE BALANCE BEING SPLIT AMONG THE VARIOUS OPPOSITION CANDIDATES. PRESUMING SIMILAR PARTY AFFILIATIONS AMONG THE VOTERS IN THIS GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION, AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE OPPOSITION COALITION, ONLY A SLIGHT SHIFT CAUSED BY ANTI-LDP SENTIMENT OR VOTER APATHY COULD LEAD TO AN UPSET VICTORY BY THE OPPOSITION CANDIDACY OF MATSUMURA. POLITICAL ANALYSTS ACKNOWLEDGE THAT HIRAI IS STILL FAVORED, BUT, NEITHER CANDIDATE HAS THE WIDESPREAD POPULARITY OF PREVIOUS GOVERNOR HASHIMOTO.

THE KEY ISSUE IS THE LDP RESPONSIBILITY FOR INVOLVEMENT IN THE LOCKHEED AND OTHER SCANDALS. THE ISSUE REMAINS TO BE DECIDED BY THE VOTERS WHO GO TO THE POLLS ON AUGUST 22.

GRIFFIN, ACTING

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